



Section 4. Theater

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OPINIONS OF FOREIGN AMBASSADORS ABOUT THE SPECTACULAR ART OF THE BUKHARA EMIRATE

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Abstract

Bukhara has long been the center of culture and science of Central Asia. Theatrical art has also developed as a form of folk art since ancient times. Various performances were organized by the critic, puppeteer, magician, matal singer, puppeteer, storyteller, clown, dancer, and amateurs. Not only the theater of Bukhara, but also in the whole of Central Asia, before the development of the present European form of theater art, the traditional performance art was performed in the palace in Emirate ceremonies and for foreign ambassadors. The opinions and impressions of the ambassadors who came to Bukhara about the folk form of Uzbek theater are important in studying the history of theater. This article talks about theater culture during the Bukhara Emirate.

Keywords: *Traditional theater, Bukhara Emirate, palace performances, Krestovsky, Ahmad Donish, ceremony*

Introduction

Bukhara is a city that has made an incomparable contribution to world civilization during its history of more than three thousand years. The definition of this corner, which has been a place of knowledge and culture since ancient times, is famous all over the world. The city of Bukhara and its surrounding districts and villages have been famous since ancient times for their artisans, musicians, singers, puppeteers, magicians, players, storytellers, clowns and dancers. Their ancient art preserves its traditions to this day.

It is known that at the beginning of the 16th century, Muhammad Shahbakht Shaibani, the ruler of the nomadic Uzbek state, attacked the Timurid kingdom, which was weakening, from the side of Dashti Kipchak. From this period, Turkestan was divided into three Khanates: Khanate of Bukhara, Khanate of Khiva and Khanate of Kokan. The throne of Bukhara was ruled by the Shaibani dynasty (1500–1601), the Ashtarkhani dynasty (1601–1752), and the Mangit dynasty (1753–1920). The rulers of the Mangit dynasty declared themselves as emirs. During

the reigns of all dynasties, cultural life was different.

During the Shaibani era, attention to education increased, schools were opened in every neighborhood, and home education was introduced in households. Children are enrolled from the age of six. In addition to theology, maths (mathematics), science of heritage (faroiz), geometry (handasa), religious jurisprudence (fiqh), calligraphy (longue, the art of calligraphy), poetry, logic, music and other subjects are taught in madrasahs.

Although the continuous war activities during the Ashtarkhanid period hindered the development of cultural life, attention was paid to the development of literature, art and other fields.

“Various forms of art were widespread in the Bukhara Khanate in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the epic “Dahmai Shahon” by Mirza Sadiq Munshi, it is said that there was an ensemble of women in the palace of Abulfaiz Khan (1711–1747) and that they had great skills in music, singing and dancing (Rahmonov M., 1968. 54). During the Ashtarkhanids period, they were not indifferent to art. From this period, various forms of art developed and artists served the khan and the public.

During the reign of the Mangits, the types of folk art – curiosity, puppetry art (“fonus xayol”), portership, traditional theater performances, music art, visual art and other types of art gradually turned into public art and developed. The development of cultural life during the reign of the Mangits was also highlighted in the books of the ambassadors who visited during this period. It is known that Bukhara was considered an emirate from 1753 to 1920. Ancient cities of Bukhara Emirate such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Karmana, Gijduvon, Kattakorgon, Karshi, Shahrisabz, Denov, Termiz, Khojand were still centers of culture, literature and art in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. In order to satisfy the cultural and aesthetic needs of each city, the people of art who were in service worked together in large and small gangs. The gangs were called “hafiz”, “maqomchilar”, “musicians”, “tricksters”, “trumpeters”, “clowns”, because these troupes are usually organized by artists who are close to each other in their chosen field.

In Bukhara’s Palace, there was an enterprise called “g’olibxona”, which was a kind of artist’s office. All the official art people in the city had to obey this administration and fulfill the decree of its elder-conqueror, the emir. A person who wanted to invite a group to a wedding or a party had to first meet the “mirshabboshi” and get a permission slip from the winner. After that, the winner allowed to go to the proposed place. The maracas, weddings, feasts, festivals held in the city of Bukhara and its surrounding villages had a theatrical appearance. Many of these ceremonies still preserve their traditions. “Navro’z”, “Qizil Gul Sayli”, “Mehrjon”, “Kor Khati”, “Yaldo tuni”, “Qovun Sayli” as well as “Gavrabandon”, “Muchal’s Wedding”, “Sunnat Wedding”, “Domod Salam”, Ceremonies and ceremonies such as “Kelin Salam”, “Talbon”, “Oyna burdan”, “Saripoy po’shon”, “Salla bandon” were held. It is known that such weddings and ceremonies were organized by popular directors such as “Kayvoni”, “Korfarmon”, “Miyaxona”, “Xodimcha”, “Sufi”. People’s artists were invited to the ceremonies according to their nature and reason. Such events were held by artists such as “Bozinger”, “Xonanda”, “Muhammasxon”, “Qayroqboz”, “Doiradachi”, “Zochakboz”, “Nayrangboz”.

During the reign of Amir Nasrullah (1827–1860), special attention was paid to art, culture, music, literature and performing arts. “The book of the Uzbek poet Saykali, who lived in the second half of the 18th century – the beginning of the 19th century, was popular in Bukhara; it was copied many times in Bukhara” (Catalog Vostochnix rukopisey. 1970. 106–108). At a time when attention to literature was strong, Emir Nasrullah united the provinces that were included in the emirate only in name until now. He appointed people “without lineage” to manage the provinces. Emir’s goal in doing these things was that his people would be united and intelligent people would multiply. Attention to literature was the basis for the development of the performing arts, and together with this, the number of ambassadorial trips began to increase.

Emir of Bukhara Nasrullah for the first time in 1857 and Emir Muzaffar (1860–1885) in 1869, 1873 (1874) sent Ahmad Donish to Russia (St. Petersburg) as the ambassador of the emir of Bukhara. Ahmad

Donish was very interested in Russian art, architecture, theater and concerts, and wrote his famous work “Navodir ul vaqoe” (“Rare Events”) based on his travel impressions. The last time Ahmad Donish visited the capital of Russia, St. Petersburg, he attended the wedding of the daughter of Emperor Alexander II named Maria and had the opportunity to see the palace customs. He was especially impressed by the theater show, the art of the singer Poti (Adelina Patti), who was invited from Paris.

“After we entered the theater, they raised the curtain of the theater. As the curtain rises, a blue, pure, clear sky is visible. The moon will also rise in the East or West. In front of the fence, greens were green and flowers were blooming like ivy hanging from all sides. At the same time, a very beautiful fairy, dressed in white, with her legs open to the knees, bare arms and shoulders, and her neck and head decorated with various flowers and pearls, comes out from the porch, surrounded by flowers and flowers. Two full moons shine from his two faces. When he appeared with such ornaments and sang with all his skill to various tunes, the audience clapped non-stop” (Ahmad Donish, 1964) says Ahmad Donish in his book.

Ahmed Donish, who came out of the ballet performance he saw at the Imperial Theater, admired the art of that lady and wrote poems and dirges dedicated to her. Ahmad Donish dreamed of such theaters and such wonderful performances in his native Bukhara.

Amir Muzaffar ruled the emirate after Amir Nasrullah Khan. The cultural life of the Bukhara Emirate flourished during the reign of Muzaffar. Amir Muzaffar paid special attention to literature and art. He was a fan of Alisher Navoi’s work (John Seyller, 2011. 325). Navoi’s ghazals, “shashmaqom” songs, theater performances and dances were widely performed at the parties held in the palace. Those who visited Bukhara described their travel impressions in their books.

During the period of the Bukhara Emir Muzaffar, the Russian ambassadors who came on a trip and expedition to the cities, districts and villages under the jurisdiction of the Bukhara Emirate. In 1878–1879, I.L. Yavorsky traveled to Afghanistan and the Bukhara Emirate and gave information

about the performances and games of the Bukhara artists in his book. Another Russian ambassador, V.V. Krestovsky, wrote in “Turkestanskije vedomosti” newspaper, “The shows and dances are so charming and elegant that they can be played successfully on the European stage” (January 14, 1875). In his book, he wrote about special performances of bachchas (children) staged in the yard. In one show, there were several dancers and drummers, two clowns and five children. “While the children were singing, the clowns, in the most impressive and lively places, illuminated the face of the audience with lamps in their hands, in order to draw the attention of the audience to the beauty of this or that singer, as is the case on the stage of Chinese and Japanese theaters, or else, with extreme seriousness, they added humorous tones to their impressions of the words of the songs. . .” (Krestovsky V.V., 1887. 175). In this place, the role of the author was performed by clowns. The songs were performed by the children themselves.

Most of the songs glorified the theme of love. Children wore bells (zang) on their hands and feet, and sometimes they played with the sticks left by our ancestors, which are used by our current folklore groups.

There are also reports that there were puppeteers in the palace. V.V. Krestovsky saw the performances called “Imagination Tent” and “Warlords” in the palace. He wrote: “The performance was performed by a seventy-five-year-old old man, who also led the Amir dancers, sometimes showing all kinds of tricks. Men, soldiers, dancers, clowns performed in the courtyard. Female performers also took part in ceremonies attended only by the emir” (Krestovsky V.V., 1887. 176–177). It can be seen that from seven to seventy years of age, all residents were highly interested in the art of spectacle and dance, status, puppetry, and clowning. They performed various shows in the emir’s palace, on public holidays, in the houses of the market and palace officials. Also shows are shown while the ambassadors are resting. In the evening, there were performances in the house where the ambassadors rest. The performances were organized by Rahmatulla and the stage was set up in the courtyard of the house. For this purpose, felts were laid on the porch, a colorful

tent was erected next to it, a colorful curtain was drawn from the tent along the walls of the house, and the yard was illuminated with colored paper and glass lanterns. People gathered in the outer courtyards to watch these spectacles. The presentation consisted of two parts. In the first, singing and dancing groups performed, musicians played music. In the second, theater marionettes, all these clowns called “masxarabozlar” or “masxara”, as well as bands and drummers (dayranchi and dangarachi) and marionettes, there was an entertainment troupe consisting of the head of the court, the main teacher and the director. Rahmatullah’s main task was to organize parties in the palace and performances for ambassadors visiting the emirate.

He also decided the sequence of the show. Rahmatulla was the director of the Amir’s Palace. V.V. Krestovsky expressed his opinion about Rahmatullah in his book (Krestovsky V.V., 1887. 142–144).

This indicates that there was a unique traditional theater in the palace of the Bukhara emir. For example: on March 4, 1879, I.L. Yavorsky reported that he saw the following performances: clowning, puppetry, trickery, dancing, instrumental music, and a two-part show performed by court actors. Theater, dance and music troupes in the Bukhara palace served not only the people of the palace but also the public. The artists of the Bukhara emir’s home theater sometimes gave special performances to their guests during the dance performance. Dancers-boys wore women’s clothes. The oldest of the children was 13 years old, the youngest was 10 years old. I.L. Yavorsky also saw the spectacles that V.V. Krestovsky saw. Amir sent court artists, singers, dancers and painters to entertain his dear guests. In addition, the ambassador candidly stated in his book that he had seen puppet shows (Yavorsky I. L., 1883. 374).

V.V. Krestovsky wrote in his book, “Amir did not enjoy such performances alone, and on holidays he sent a part of his troupe to Bukhara Bazaar, Ark Square, the edge of the pond “Labi Hovuz”, Chorsu to perform. Clowns, dancers, and puppeters show the people free shows” (Krestovsky V.V., 1887. 160). In addition to “chavklar”, “qoribozlik”, “qassobbozlik”, “polvonbozlik”, “sartarosh-

lik” performances, performances related to animals are shown in the Amir’s palace.

Emir Muzaffar of Bukhara maintained peaceful relations with the Russian Empire from July 1868 until his death in 1885 (Petrovsky N.F. 1873). A number of ambassadors I.I. Nosovich, L.F. Kostenko and N.F. Petrovsky visited Bukhara. The ceremonies of welcoming the ambassadors were held in Uzbek. Russian ambassador L.F. Kostenko (Kostenko L.F., 1871. 75–78), who traveled to Bukhara in 1870, recorded his impressions of the performances he saw in Bukhara in his book. Amir Muzaffar established strong relations with the Russian Empire. This was the basis for the development of theater art among all fields.

In Bukhara, many performances were held as a game. That’s why they were called “games”. They were: “Fire eater”, “Horse game”, “Knife game”, “Clap game”, “Ship game” and different district games (shows) depending on the theme depending on the season and holidays. In 1885, an anonymous person wrote that he saw the “Game of Ships” with his own eyes in Bukhara. “Four ships with lanterns hanging around them take part in the holiday show, and they cross each other and rotate in place” (“Turkestanskije vedomosti” newspaper, May 14, 1885).

L.S. Nikitin (Nikitin L.S. 1885) wrote that this play is mainly performed during Nowruz celebrations and during evening night performances. In addition, the court actors also turned to the comedy genre. In the comedies “Mirob”, “Xirmon ko’tarish”, “Qazibozlik”, “Qaribozlik”, the life of farmers in the Bukhara khanate is depicted truthfully” (Rahmonov M., 1968. 80). These pesas are in the form of dialogues, in which mainly two characters participated. For example, the heroes of the play “Qaribozlik” are Ochilboy and Qori.

The main character of the play was Qori, who cheated people without knowing the Koran, did not show kindness to anyone, and was very stingy and selfish even to himself. He started young children to steal and always wanted children to be stupid from a young age, saying that “a child who studies is frowned upon” (Kadirov M., 1963. 89–91).

The heroes of the play – Qori and Mullahs did not intend to lead the people to the right path, but rather to live at the expense of the people. At the end of the events, Qori and

mullahs measured the prosperity of the village by the number of deaths, and the higher the number of deaths, the more prosperous the village is.

Because there was a lot of income from those villages. The image of Ochilboy is a representative of the people. Ochilboy always laughs at Qori and exposes his dishonesty, immorality, deceit, greed, and cunning. He not only reveals the secrets of the mullahs, but at the same time, he deliberately questions them, talks about them in public, rushes them, and embarrasses them. As a result, Qori's true face will be shown and it will be exposed that he has been deceiving the people with lies.

Through these images, the actors who came out of the people opened the eyes of the public and called them to knowledge and enlightenment. In historical sources, as well as in the memoirs of Russian and other ambassadors, there is a lot of interesting information about the culture and art of the Bukhara Emirate. The sources we cited mention the state of Bukhara's traditional theater art three centuries earlier. There is no doubt that the visit of the ambassadors to Bukhara gave impetus to the development of art forms as well as a number of fields. The current state of traditional arts can be a basis for saying that.

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